MARVEL
PSR 518
THE AMAZING
SPIDER-MAN
STRACZYNSKI
DEODATO JR
BROOKS
SKIN DEEP
PART 4 of 4
DUSKO 04

Now that Charlie suspects Peter Parker betrayed him to Spider-Man, it's only a matter of time before he decides to turn his attention in that direction.

The first good thing is that I had MJ collect May and get both of them to a hotel, to keep them safe.

The second good thing is...is...

I really need to get some second good things.

--AN ARTIST'S CONCEPTION OF THE ASSAILANT--

--AN INDIVIDUAL ENCASED IN A KIND OF BRONZE OR COPPER ARMOR, WHO WAS SEEN FLEEING THE SCENE WHERE A YOUNG MARRIED COUPLE WERE HORRIBLY MURDERED.

Say what?

POLICE HAVE THUS FAR RELEASED FEW DETAILS ABOUT THE DOUBLE SLAYING, EXCEPT TO CONFIRM THAT THE SUSPECT MATCHES THE DESCRIPTION OF AN INDIVIDUAL WHO ATTACKED AND CAUSED THE DEATH OF TWO FIREFIGHTERS IN THE AFTERMATH OF AN EXPLOSION IN A LOCAL INDUSTRIAL PARK.

SKIN DEEP

PART FOUR

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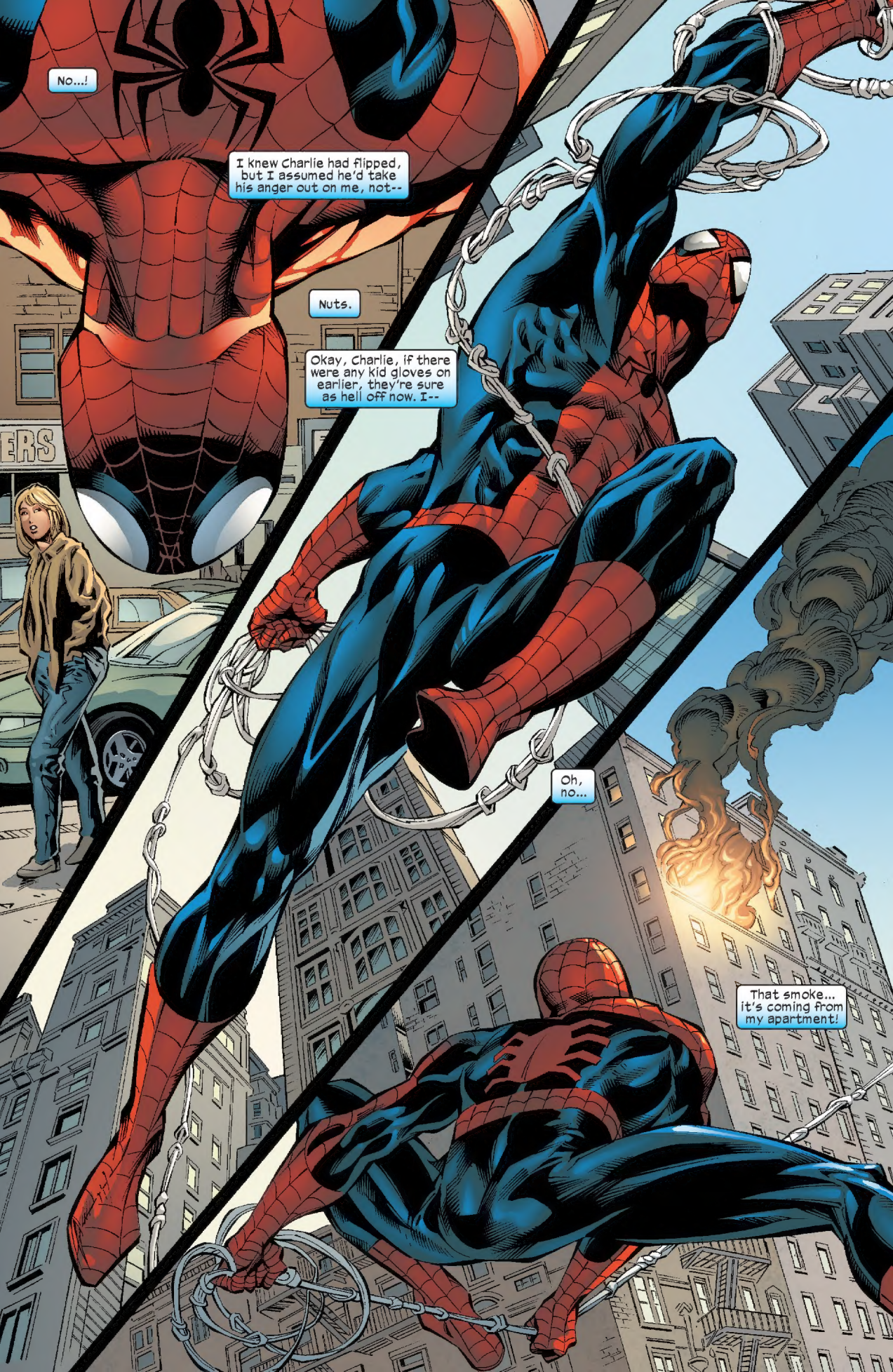
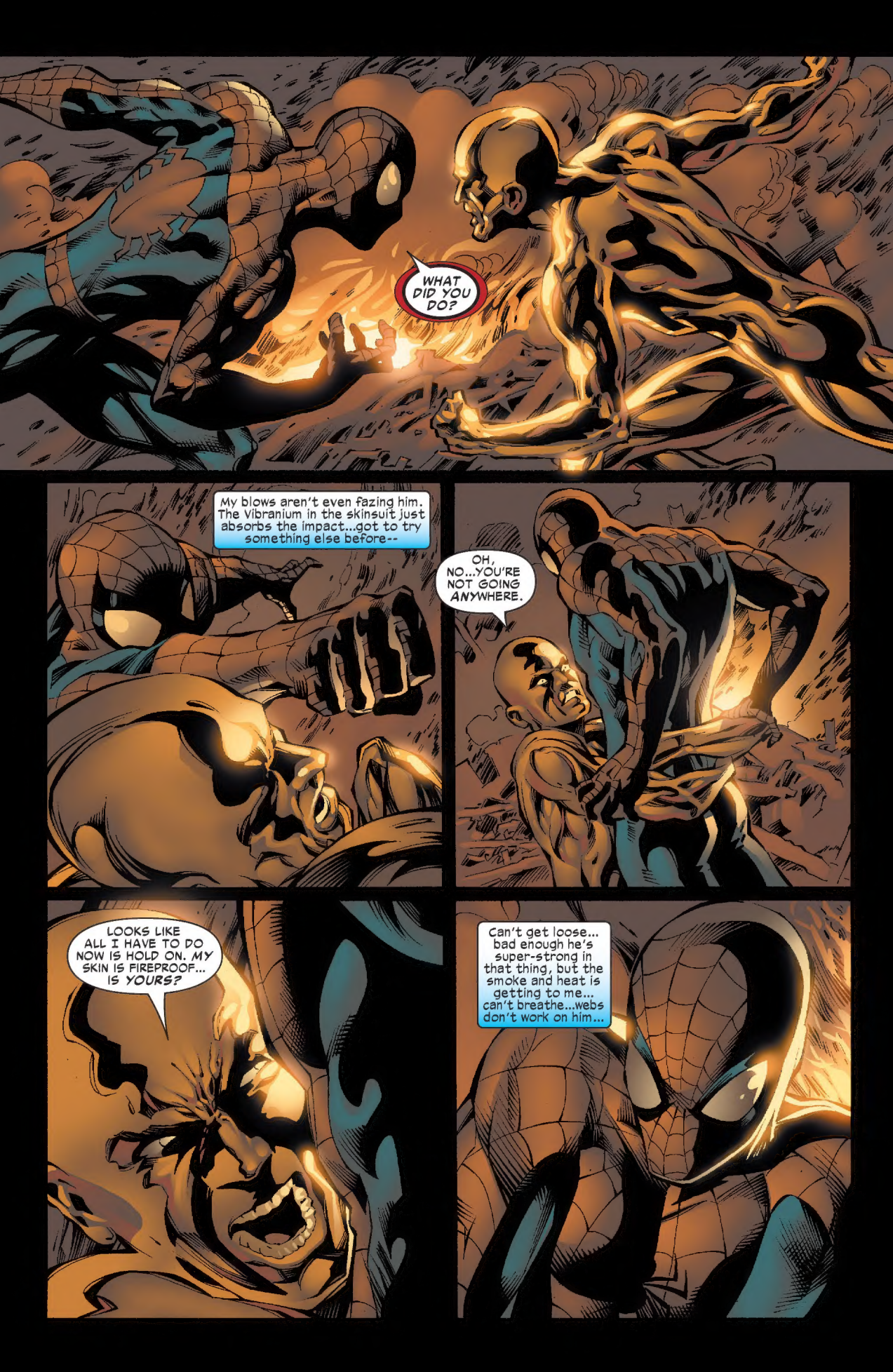
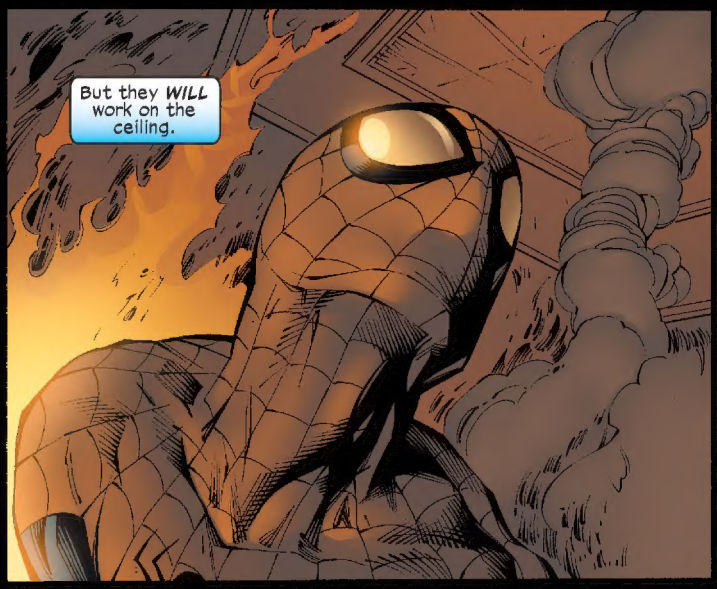

No...!
I knew Charlie had flipped, but I assumed he'd take his anger out on me, not--
Nuts.
Okay, Charlie, if there were any kid gloves on earlier, they're sure as hell off now. I--
Oh, no...
That smoke... it's coming from my apartment!

No time for pretense or secret identities now... have to get in and make sure nobody's hurt, make sure MJ got out.
HELLO... IS ANYBODY HERE? HELLO!?
Can't see a thing in this smoke... spider-sense is ringing like a bell. With the fire on all sides, danger all around me, it's hard to pick up on anyone--
--behind me!
WHERE'S PARKER? WHERE IS HE?
HE'S SAFE. THEY'RE ALL SAFE, WHERE YOU CAN'T TOUCH THEM.
OH, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT...I'D SAY I'VE TOUCHED THEM.
WHAT ARE YOU... WHAT DID YOU DO?

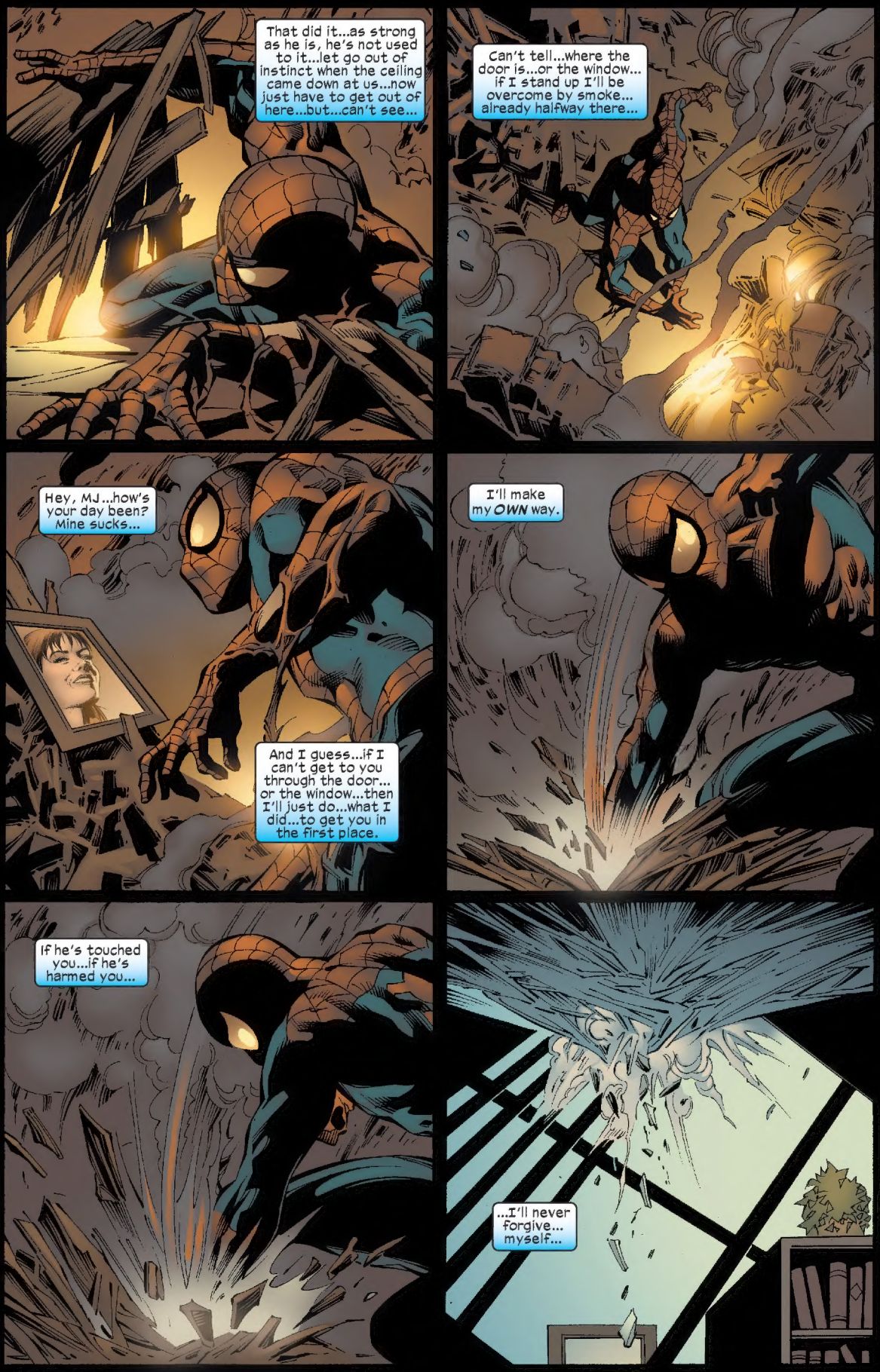

WHAT DID YOU DO?
My blows aren't even fazing him. The Vibranium in the skinsuit just absorbs the impact...got to try something else before--
OH, NO...YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
LOOKS LIKE ALL I HAVE TO DO NOW IS HOLD ON. MY SKIN IS FIREPROOF... IS YOURS?
Can't get loose... bad enough he's super-strong in that thing, but the smoke and heat is getting to me... can't breathe...webs don't work on him...


But they WILL work on the ceiling.

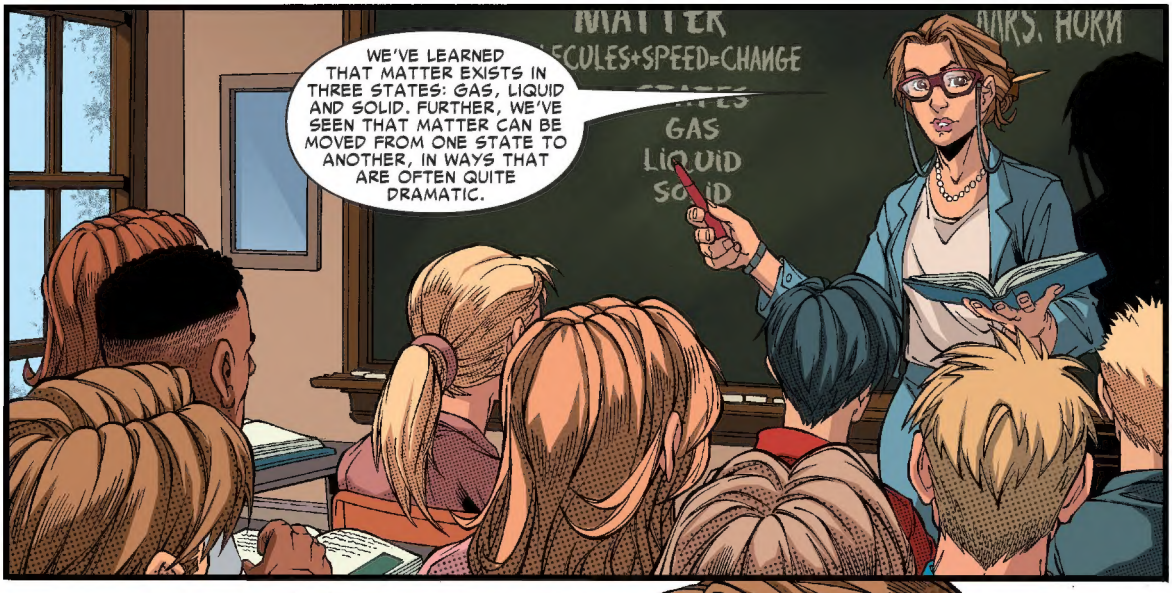
Ribs ready to break...just one chance at this... one...two...

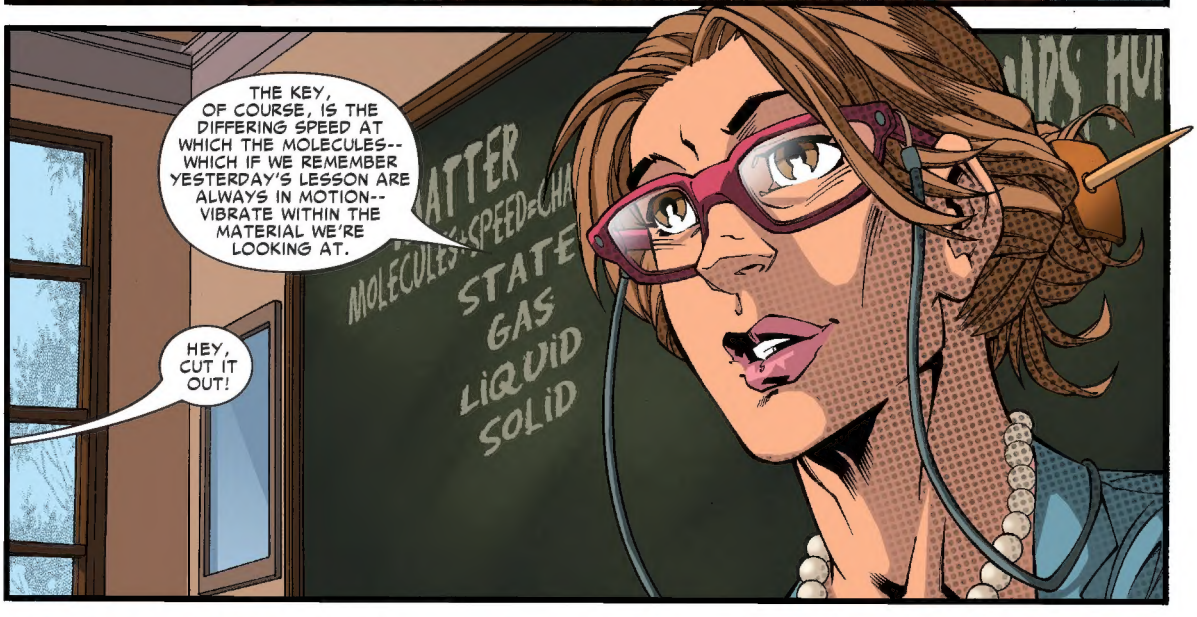
THREE!
WHAT THE--

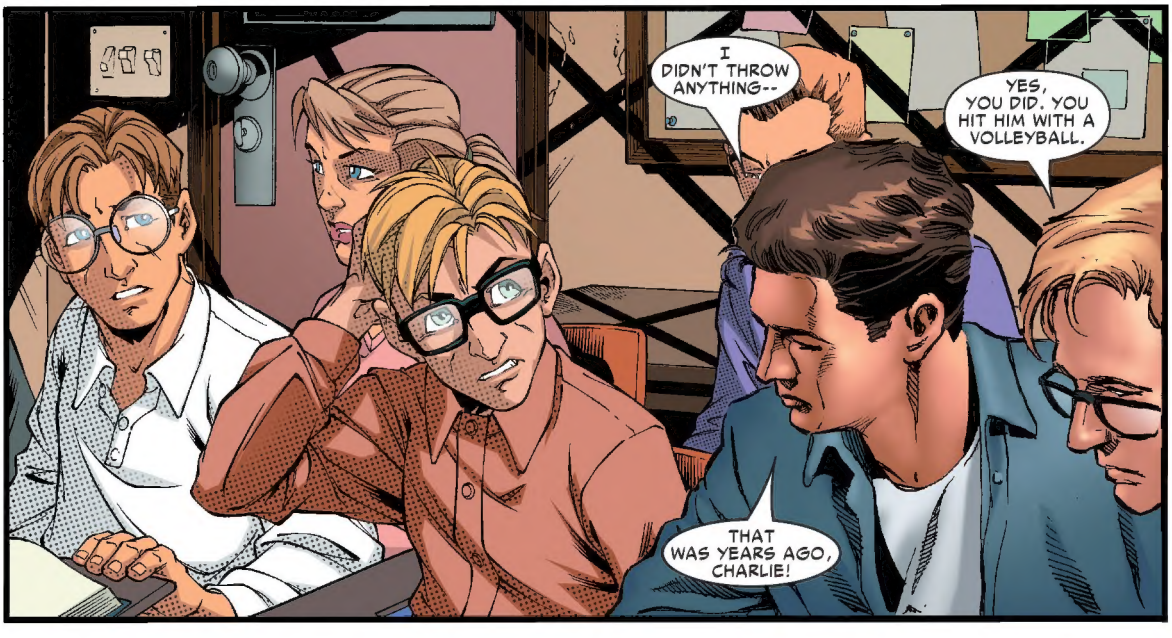
THE SPIDER-MAN

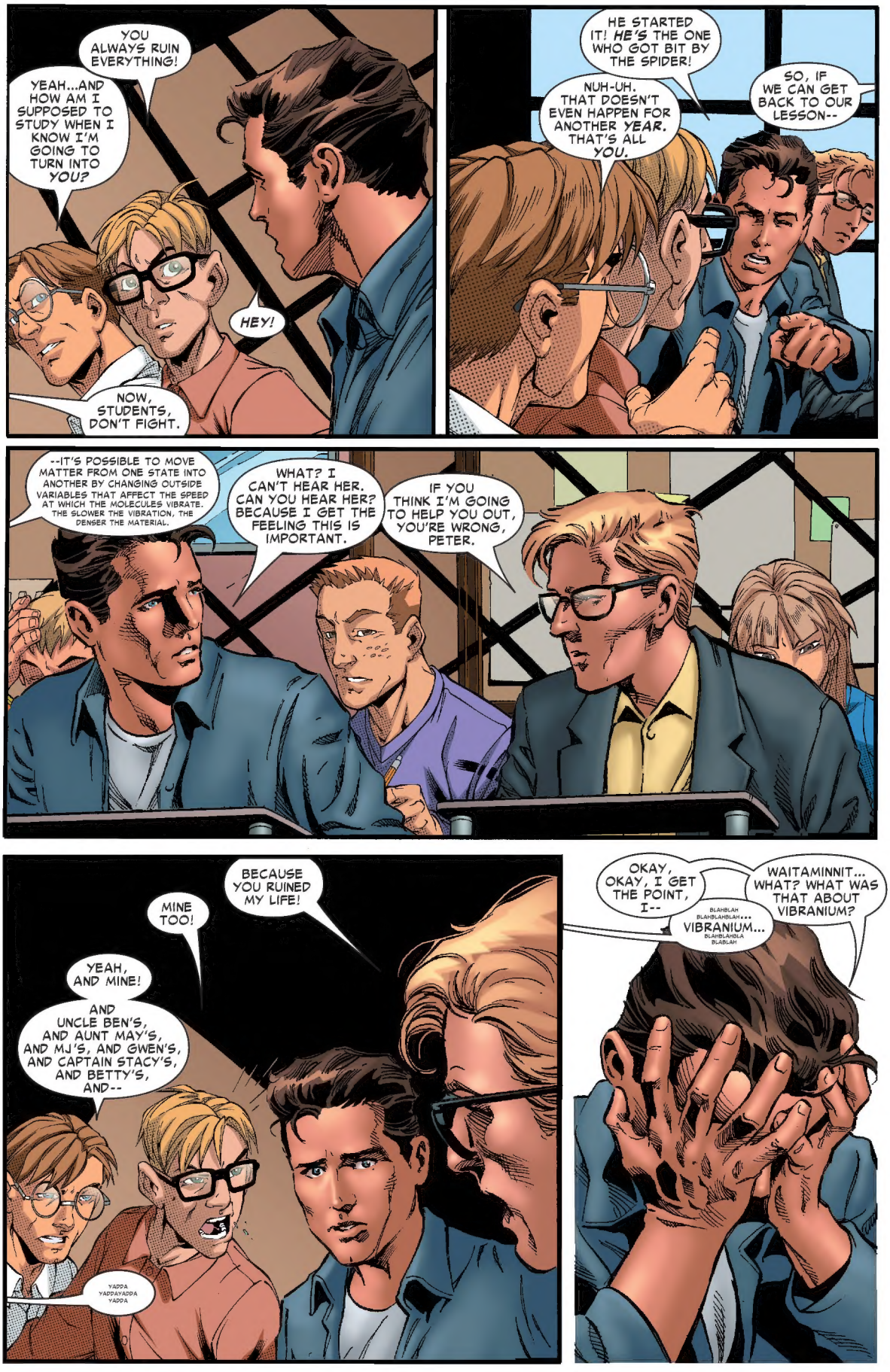

That did it...as strong as he is, he's not used to it...let go out of instinct when the ceiling came down at us...now just have to get out of here...but...can't see...
Can't tell...where the door is...or the window... if I stand up I'll be overcome by smoke... already halfway there...
Hey, MJ...how's your day been? Mine sucks...
And I guess...if I can't get to you through the door... or the window...then I'll just do...what I did...to get you in the first place.
I'll make my OWN way.
If he's touched you...if he's harmed you...
...I'll never forgive... myself...

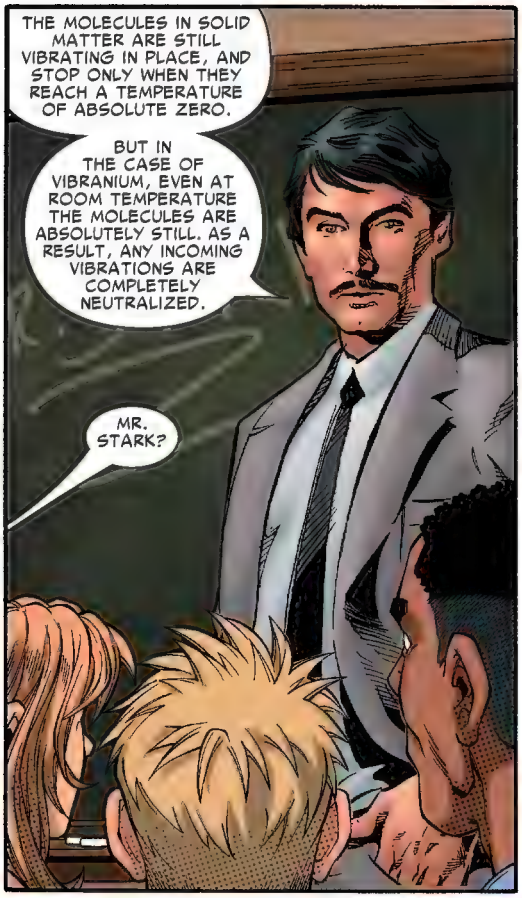
Head spinning from the smoke...but I can't rest... can't stop until he--
SLEECKER
...he...
UHNH...
ATM
"And what have we learned from this exercise, class?"
ATM
SLEECKER

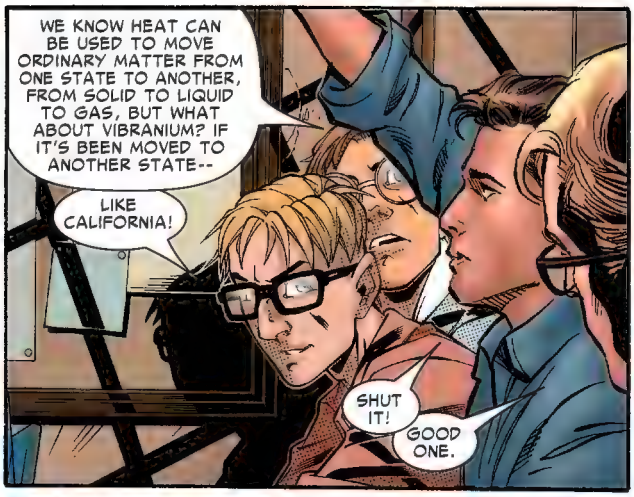

WE'VE LEARNED THAT MATTER EXISTS IN THREE STATES: GAS, LIQUID AND SOLID. FURTHER, WE'VE SEEN THAT MATTER CAN BE MOVED FROM ONE STATE TO ANOTHER, IN WAYS THAT ARE OFTEN QUITE DRAMATIC.
GAS
LIQUID

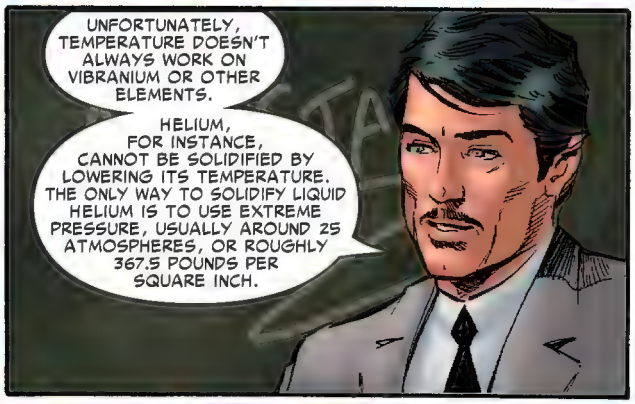

THE KEY, OF COURSE, IS THE DIFFERING SPEED AT WHICH THE MOLECULES-- WHICH IF WE REMEMBER YESTERDAY'S LESSON ARE ALWAYS IN MOTION-- VIBRATE WITHIN THE MATERIAL WE'RE LOOKING AT.
HEY, CUT IT OUT!
STATE
GAS
LIQUID
SOLID

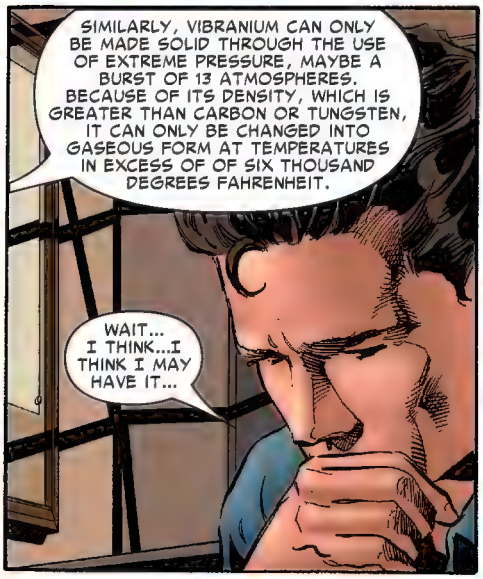

I DIDN'T THROW ANYTHING--
YES, YOU DID. YOU HIT HIM WITH A VOLLEYBALL.
THAT WAS YEARS AGO, CHARLIE!

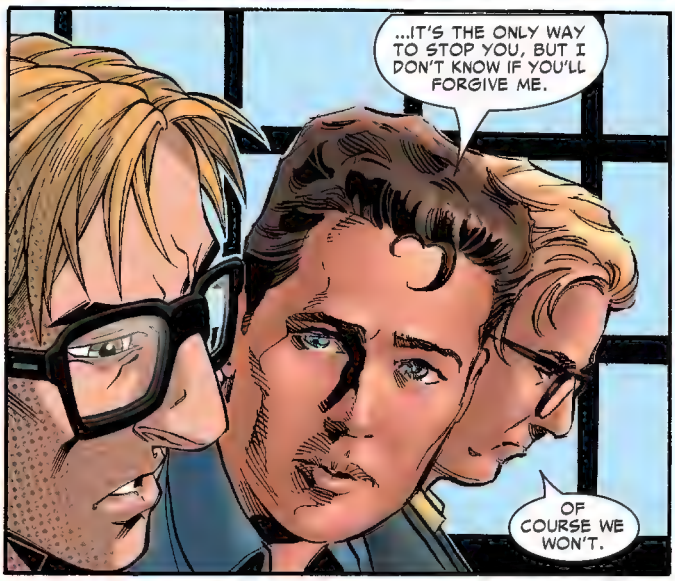

YOU ALWAYS RUIN EVERYTHING!
YEAH...AND HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO STUDY WHEN I KNOW I'M GOING TO TURN INTO YOU?
HEY!
NOW, STUDENTS, DON'T FIGHT.
HE STARTED IT! HE'S THE ONE WHO GOT BIT BY THE SPIDER!
NUH-UH. THAT DOESN'T EVEN HAPPEN FOR ANOTHER YEAR. THAT'S ALL YOU.
SO, IF WE CAN GET BACK TO OUR LESSON--
--IT'S POSSIBLE TO MOVE MATTER FROM ONE STATE INTO ANOTHER BY CHANGING OUTSIDE VARIABLES THAT AFFECT THE SPEED AT WHICH THE MOLECULES VIBRATE. THE SLOWER THE VIBRATION, THE DENSER THE MATERIAL.
WHAT? I CAN'T HEAR HER. CAN YOU HEAR HER? BECAUSE I GET THE FEELING THIS IS IMPORTANT.
IF YOU THINK I'M GOING TO HELP YOU OUT, YOU'RE WRONG, PETER.
BECAUSE YOU RUINED MY LIFE!
MINE TOO!
YEAH, AND MINE!
AND UNCLE BEN'S, AND AUNT MAY'S, AND MJ'S, AND GWEN'S, AND CAPTAIN STACY'S, AND BETTY'S, AND--
YADDA YADDAYADDA YADDA
OKAY, OKAY, I GET THE POINT, I--
BLAHBLAH BLAHBLAHBLAH... VIBRANIUM... BLAHBLAHBLA BLABLAH
WAITAMINNIT... WHAT? WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT VIBRANIUM?


THE MOLECULES IN SOLID MATTER ARE STILL VIBRATING IN PLACE, AND STOP ONLY WHEN THEY REACH A TEMPERATURE OF ABSOLUTE ZERO.
BUT IN THE CASE OF VIBRANIUM, EVEN AT ROOM TEMPERATURE THE MOLECULES ARE ABSOLUTELY STILL. AS A RESULT, ANY INCOMING VIBRATIONS ARE COMPLETELY NEUTRALIZED.
MR. STARK?


WE KNOW HEAT CAN BE USED TO MOVE ORDINARY MATTER FROM ONE STATE TO ANOTHER, FROM SOLID TO LIQUID TO GAS, BUT WHAT ABOUT VIBRANIUM? IF IT'S BEEN MOVED TO ANOTHER STATE--
LIKE CALIFORNIA!
SHUT IT!
GOOD ONE.


UNFORTUNATELY, TEMPERATURE DOESN'T ALWAYS WORK ON VIBRANIUM OR OTHER ELEMENTS.
HELIUM, FOR INSTANCE, CANNOT BE SOLIDIFIED BY LOWERING ITS TEMPERATURE. THE ONLY WAY TO SOLIDIFY LIQUID HELIUM IS TO USE EXTREME PRESSURE, USUALLY AROUND 25 ATMOSPHERES, OR ROUGHLY 367.5 POUNDS PER SQUARE INCH.


SIMILARLY, VIBRANIUM CAN ONLY BE MADE SOLID THROUGH THE USE OF EXTREME PRESSURE, MAYBE A BURST OF 13 ATMOSPHERES. BECAUSE OF ITS DENSITY, WHICH IS GREATER THAN CARBON OR TUNGSTEN, IT CAN ONLY BE CHANGED INTO GASEOUS FORM AT TEMPERATURES IN EXCESS OF OF SIX THOUSAND DEGREES FAHRENHEIT.
WAIT... I THINK...I THINK I MAY HAVE IT...


...IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO STOP YOU, BUT I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'LL FORGIVE ME.
OF COURSE WE WON'T.

"HAS ANYONE, EVER?"

IS HE DEAD?
UNDER THAT MASK, WHO CAN TELL?
DUDE, HE'S MOVING.
OKAY, THEN DEAD, PROBABLY NOT SO MUCH.
YOU OKAY? I CAN GET YOU SOME WATER--
NO, I'M...I'M ALL RIGHT, I--
--GOD. DID EVERYONE GET OUT?
YEAH, NOBODY GOT HURT. THE FIRE WAS CONFINED MAINLY TO ONE APARTMENT. BUT YOU KNOW IT'S GOING TO BRING DOWN THE PROPERTY VALUE. DID YOU SEE WHAT--
SORRY, I...I HAVE TO GO.
YEAH, SURE, SWING BY ANY TIME YOU WANT TO SCOPE OUT ORDINARY FOLKS HAVING A REALLY BAD DAY.
HEY, C'MON, CUT THE GUY SOME SLACK--

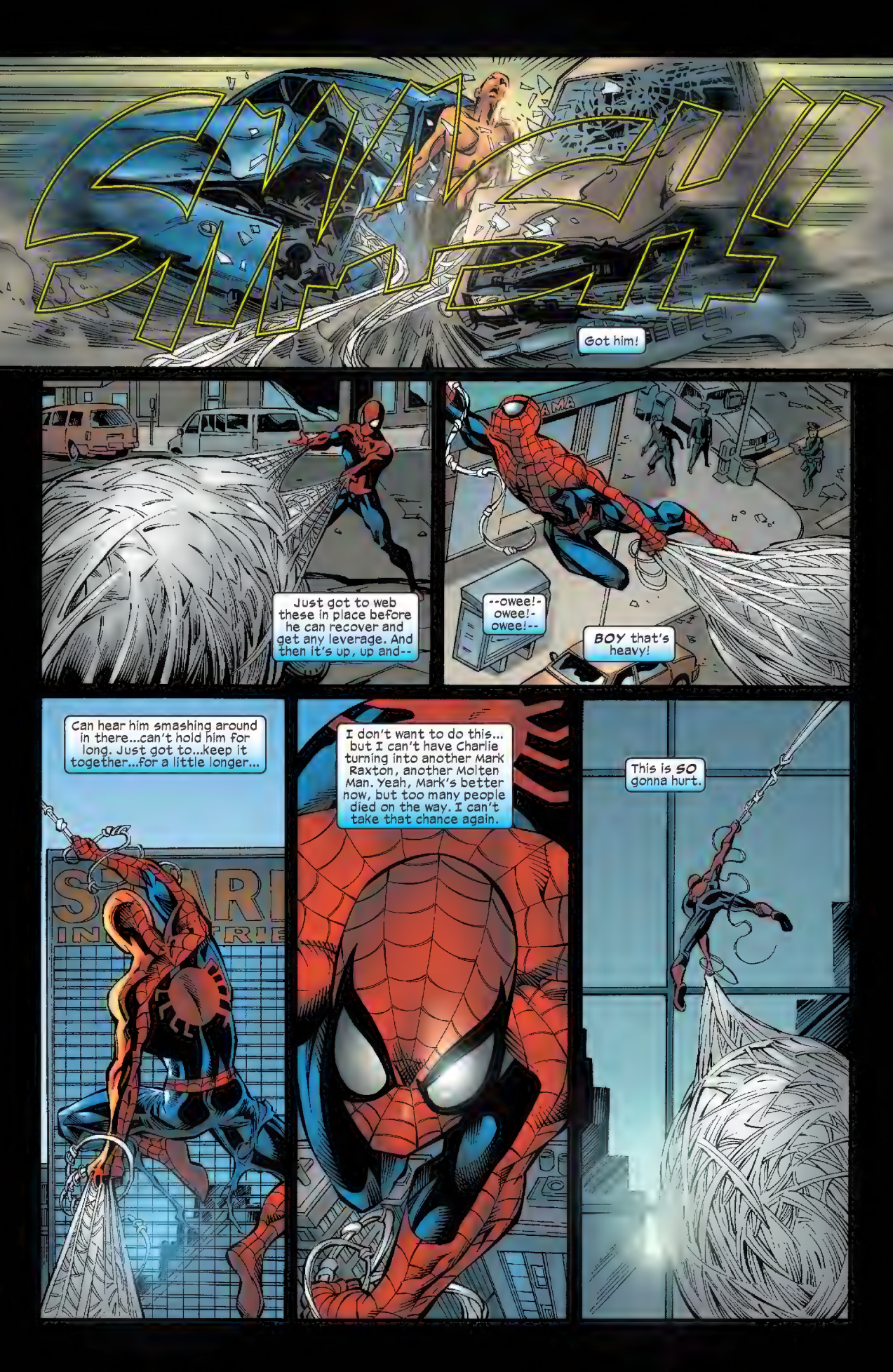
"--LOOKED TO ME LIKE HE WAS HAVING A PRETTY BAD DAY HIMSELF."
Can't stop to think about the apartment now. What's gone is gone. What matters now is stopping Charlie.
And I think I know just where to go for the help I need.
WELL, DID HE SAY WHAT THE LONG-TERM INTEREST SITUATION WOULD BE? NO, I WANT REAL NUMBERS, NOT SPECULATION.
PSSST...
THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH, I--
BOSS... PSSST...HEY, BOSS...
SO, LIKE I WAS WONDERING, CAN I BORROW SOME OF YOUR REALLY EXPENSIVE EQUIPMENT AND, LIKE, TRASH IT? CAN I? HUH? CAN I? AND THEN CAN I HAVE THE KEYS TO THE CAR, LIKE LAST WEEK WHEN I NEEDED IT FOR LIKE SCHOOL AND STUFF?
BILL? I'LL GET BACK TO YOU.
ANYBODY EVER TELL YOU THAT YOU'D MAKE A REALLY GREAT IMAGINARY TEACHER? OF COURSE, THAT WOULD MEAN FINDING AN IMAGINARY OPENING IN AN IMAGINARY SCHOOL, AND WITH SO MANY IMAGINARY CUTBACKS...
YOU'VE GOT TWO MINUTES, PETER. SPEND THEM WISELY.
YESSIR.

TWO MINUTES LATER...
Boy, he can be grumpy some days. But at least phase one is in place. Now for phase two...
...after I make one call.
CASA QUESADA HOTEL, HOW MAY I DIRECT YOUR CALL?
MARY JANE PARKER'S ROOM, PLEASE.
PETER? ARE YOU OKAY? I COULD SEE THE FIRE FROM HERE, AND--
I'M GOOD, MJ. BUT THE APARTMENT IS GONE.
OH, NO...
BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER RIGHT NOW. ARE YOU AND MAY ALL RIGHT?
IT'S PETER. WE'RE ALL RIGHT, RIGHT?
WE'RE BOTH FINE, PETER. BUT THIS IS A VERY STRANGE HOTEL. APPARENTLY AT CASA QUESADA HOUSEKEEPING ONLY COMES BY ONCE EVERY SIX MONTHS.
NOW, AUNT MAY, YOU'RE EXAGGERATING.
YES, I'M KNOWN FOR THAT.
HAVE YOU FOUND CHARLIE YET?
FOUND, THEN LOST AGAIN. BUT WITH EVERY COP IN TOWN LOOKING FOR HIM ON MURDER CHARGES, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO PICK UP THE TRAIL PRETTY FAST.
HOW?
HEY, THIS IS NEW YORK, WHERE THE FIRST RULE IS ALWAYS...

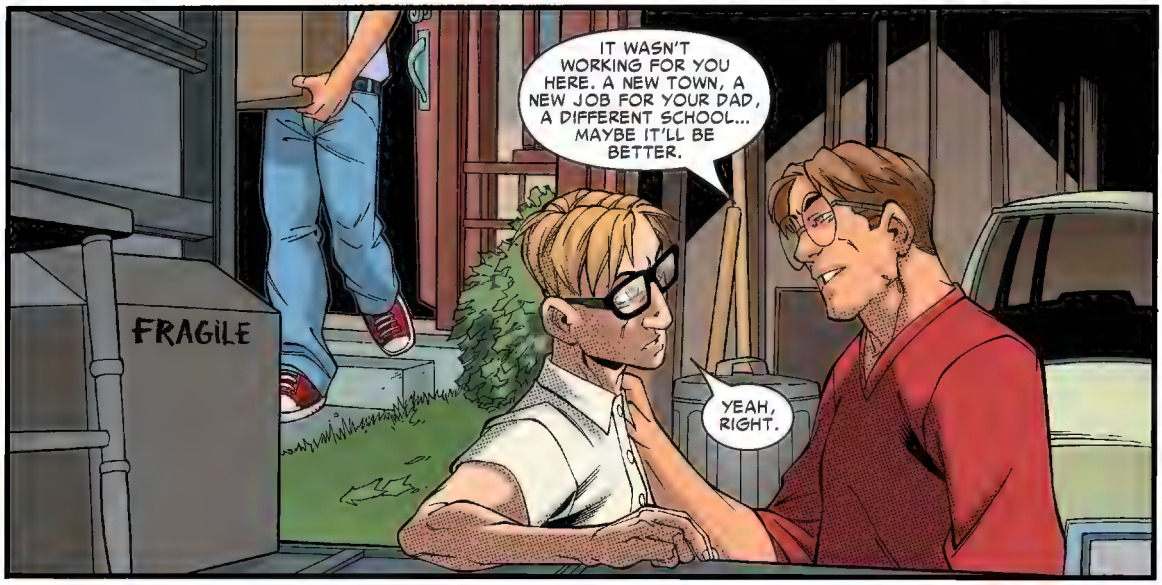
...JUST FOLLOW THE SIRENS.
I SAID LEAVE ME ALONE!
PIZZA
I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU! YOU HEAR ME? YOU CAN'T HURT ME!

He's out of his mind... deranged by the chemicals...desperate to escape, and they can't hurt him in that skinsuit...have to get in there before anybody else gets hurt.
YOU WANT TO FIGHT? HUH? WELL, THEN, COME ON!
CRUNCH!
OH, SO NOW YOU'RE AFRAID, HUH? NOW YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO--
WHAT'RE YOU--
Got to focus his anger on me, not them.
Fortunately, I've never had a problem with that.
--LOOKING AT?
HOW-DO.
YOU!
SO, OBI-WANNA-BE, IS THAT A LIGHT POLE IN YOUR HANDS, OR ARE YOU JUST HAPPY TO SEE ME?
KER-WHAMM!
LOOK, BUDDY, WOULDN'T IT BE EASIER TO JUST GIVE UP? I MEAN, LOOKING LIKE THAT, IT'S NOT LIKE YOU CAN JUST SLIP OUT OF TOWN WITHOUT BEING NOTICED. IF YOU GO WITH THE NICE OFFICERS, THEY CAN--
HEALTH IS WE

Whoa...I forget sometimes how fast he is. Still, I have to keep at him until I get him into position.
BUT IF YOU REALLY WANT TO STICK AROUND I SUPPOSE WE COULD ALWAYS GET YOU A JOB AS A STAND-IN FOR THE OSCAR AWARD. WE COULD CALL YOU THE LOSER AWARD.
SHUT UP!
I'M NOT A LOSER! THIS ISN'T MY FAULT! IT'S PARKER! IT'S HIS FAULT! HE BETRAYED ME!
That's it, just keep ranting for ten more seconds--
--enough so he's distracted. Because even though my webbing doesn't stick to that skinsuit--
--it'll stick just fine to those cars.
One Charlie sandwich, coming up.

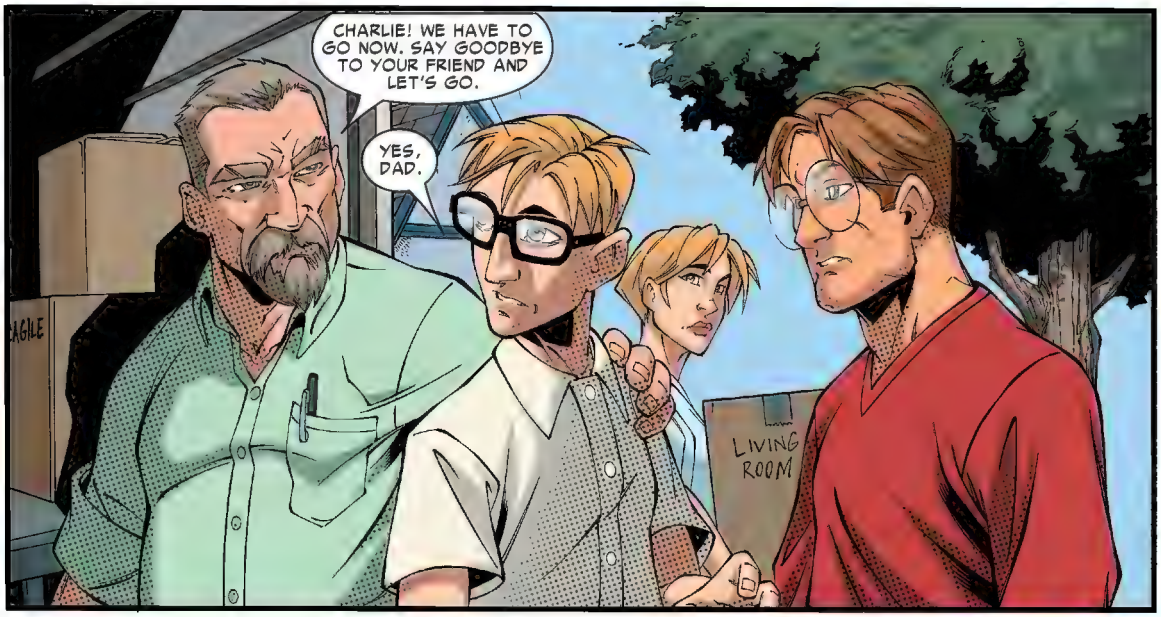

SMASH
Got him!
Just got to web these in place before he can recover and get any leverage. And then it's up, up and--
--owee!- owee!- owee!--
BOY that's heavy!
Can hear him smashing around in there...can't hold him for long. Just got to...keep it together...for a little longer...
I don't want to do this... but I can't have Charlie turning into another Mark Raxton, another Molten Man. Yeah, Mark's better now, but too many people died on the way. I can't take that chance again.
This is SO gonna hurt.

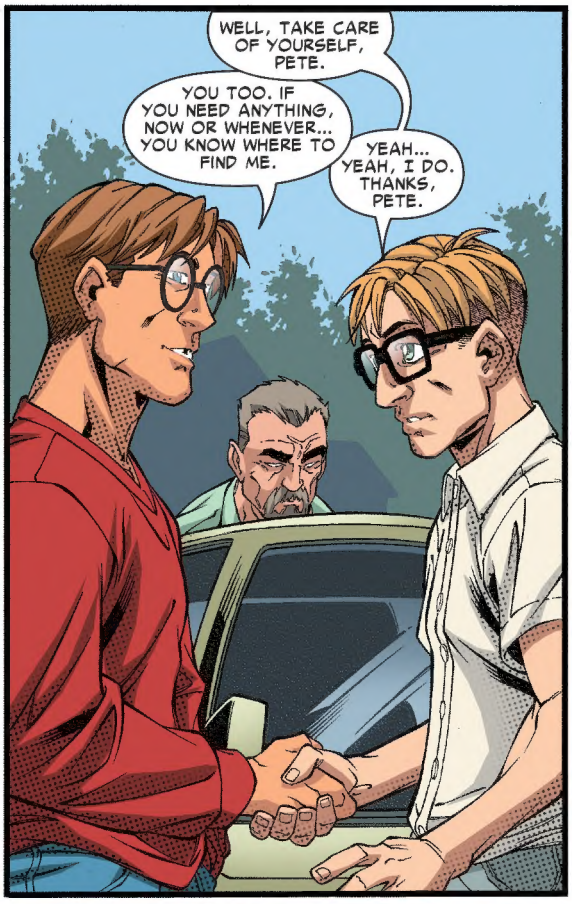
CRASH
UHNNH!
UH-OH... NO TIME TO REST NOW, PETER.
DID YOU THINK THAT WAS GOING TO STOP ME? I'M NOT SOME WEAKLING ANYMORE...I'M NOT HELPLESS ANYMORE. I CAN DO ANYTHING I WANT, I--
SAVE IT.
--OOOOF!
WHAT... WHAT'RE YOU--
I'M SORRY, CHARLIE, BUT IT HAS TO BE THIS WAY.
INCREASING PRESSURE TO 15 ATMOSPHERES.
"I know this isn't easy, Charlie, but it's really the best thing."

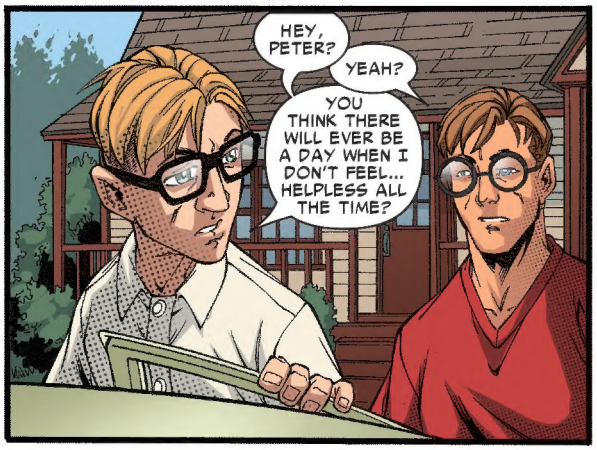

FRAGILE
IT WASN'T WORKING FOR YOU HERE. A NEW TOWN, A NEW JOB FOR YOUR DAD, A DIFFERENT SCHOOL... MAYBE IT'LL BE BETTER.
YEAH, RIGHT.

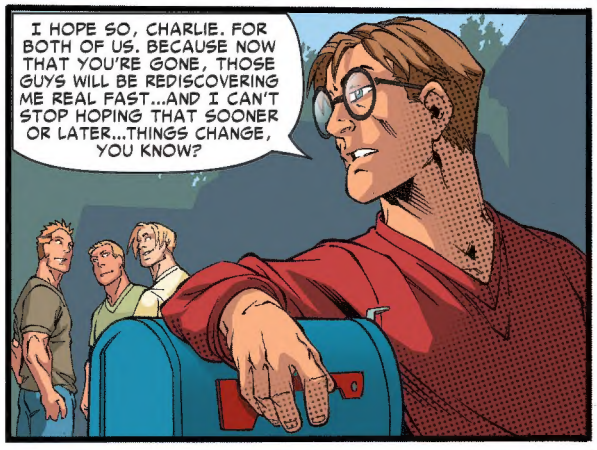
LIKE THOSE GUYS CAN'T BE FOUND AT ANY SCHOOL IN THE COUNTRY.
I KNOW... BUT THERE'S DEGREES OF DIFFERENCE, YOU KNOW?

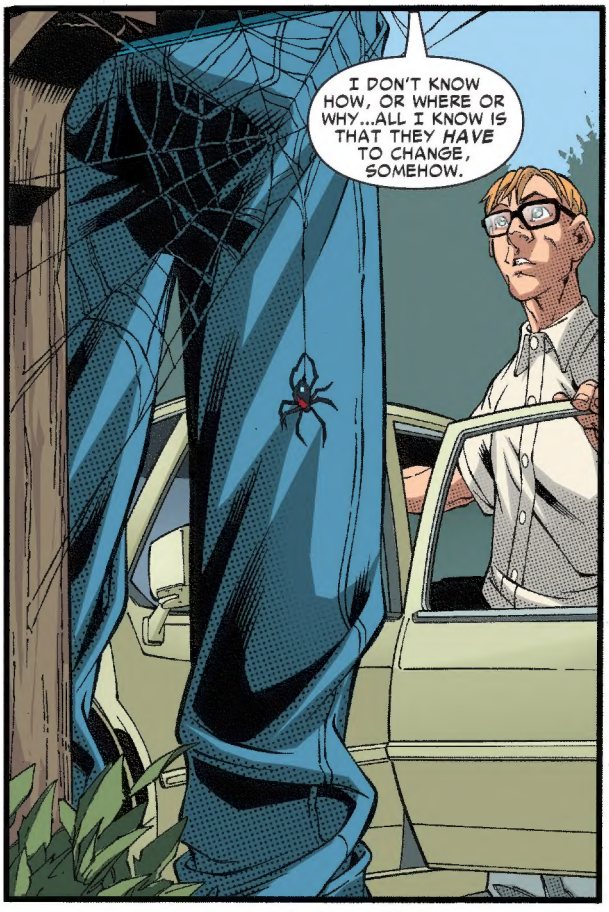
"AT LEAST THIS WILL TAKE SOME OF THE PRESSURE OFF YOU...BECAUSE NOBODY CAN TAKE THAT FOR VERY LONG."
NO! LET ME OUT! LET ME GO!

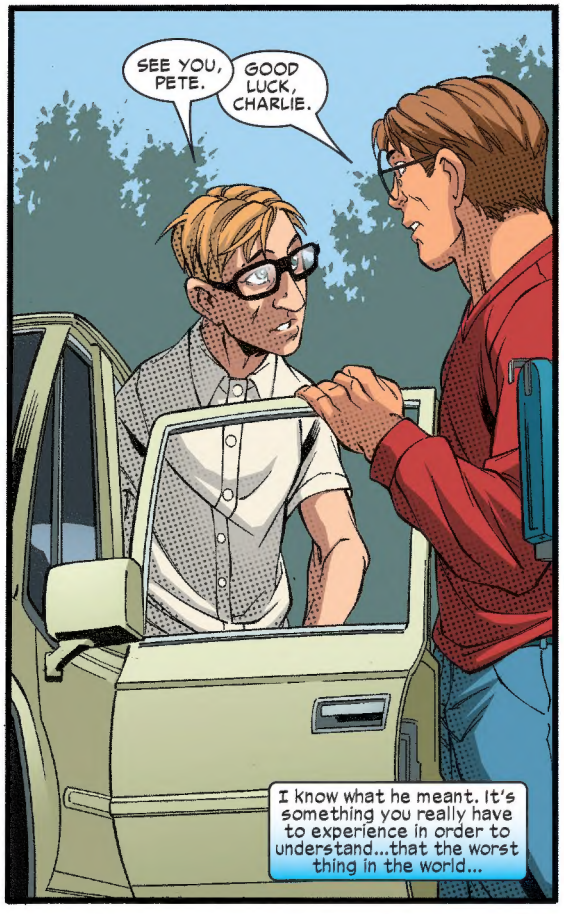

CHARLIE! WE HAVE TO GO NOW. SAY GOODBYE TO YOUR FRIEND AND LET'S GO.
YES, DAD.
LIVING ROOM

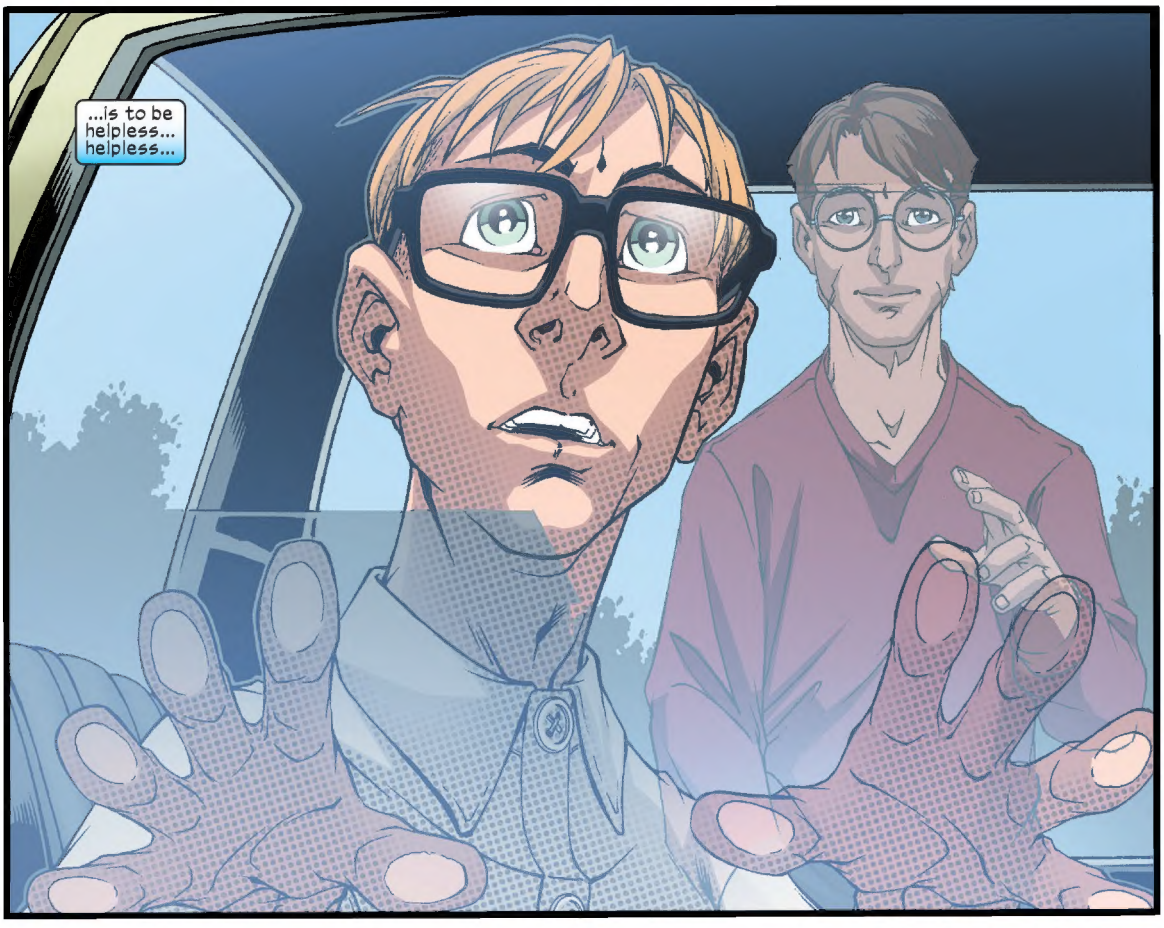

WELL, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, PETE.
YOU TOO. IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, NOW OR WHENEVER... YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME.
YEAH... YEAH, I DO. THANKS, PETE.

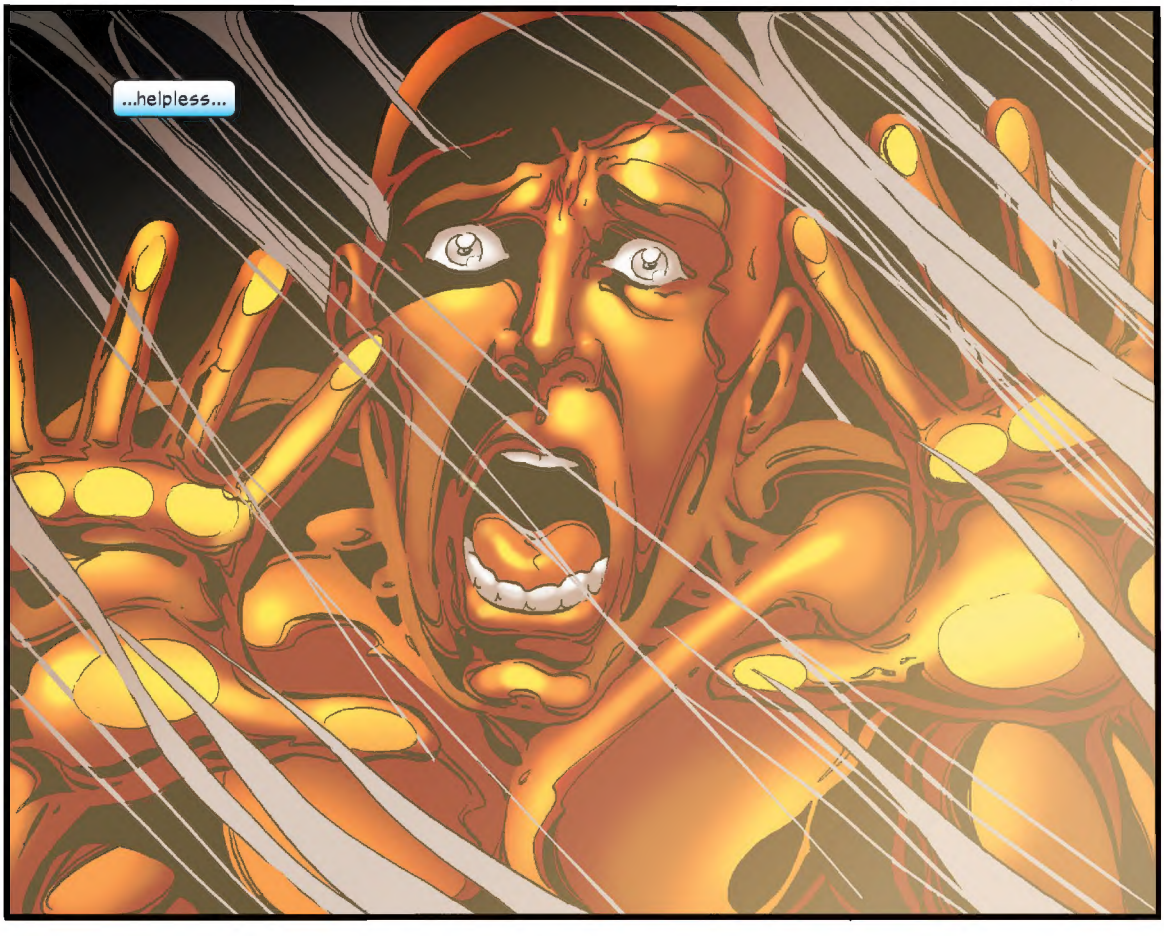

HEY, PETER?
YEAH?
YOU THINK THERE WILL EVER BE A DAY WHEN I DON'T FEEL... HELPLESS ALL THE TIME?

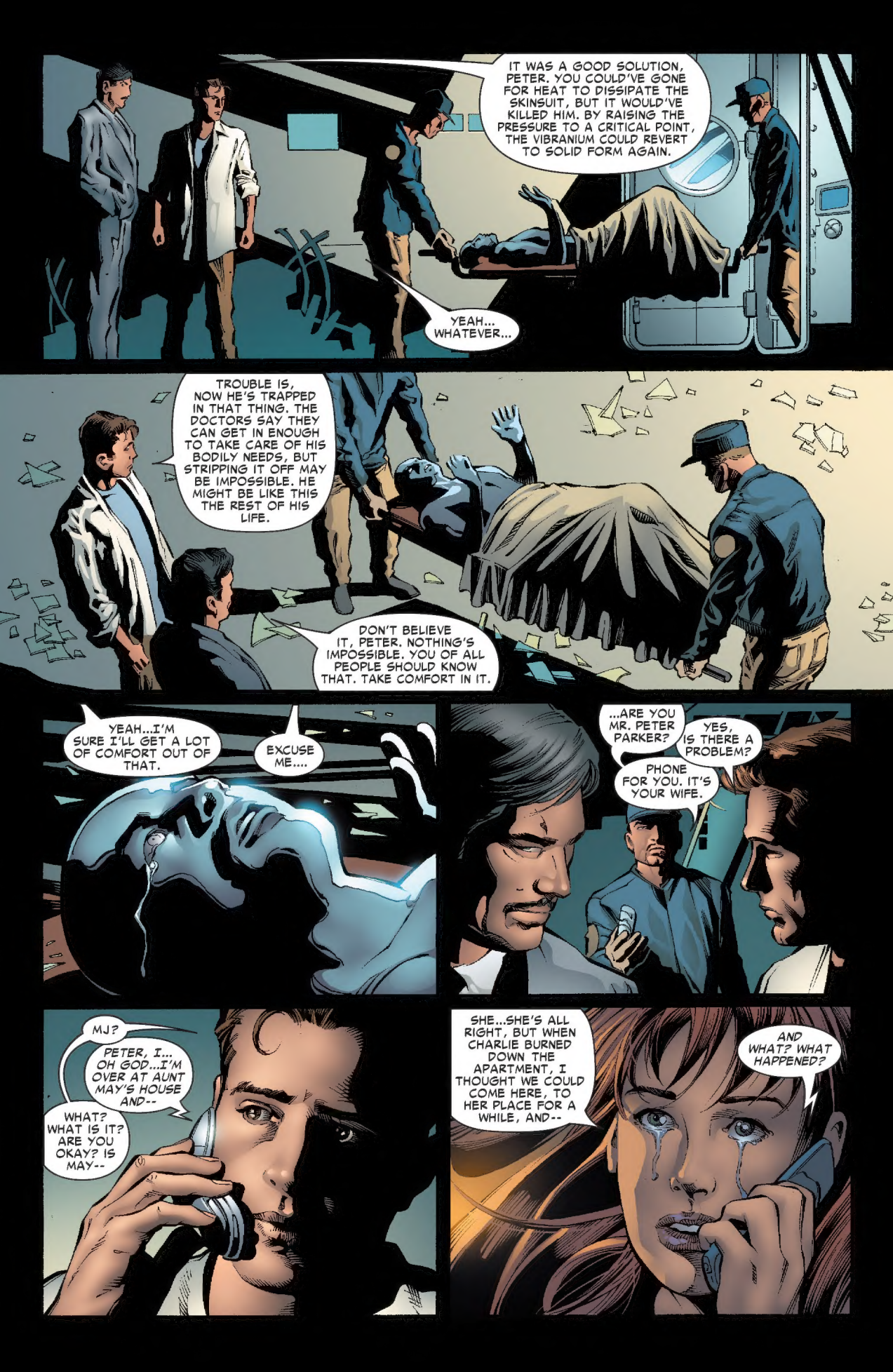

I HOPE SO, CHARLIE. FOR BOTH OF US. BECAUSE NOW THAT YOU'RE GONE, THOSE GUYS WILL BE REDISCOVERING ME REAL FAST...AND I CAN'T STOP HOPING THAT SOONER OR LATER...THINGS CHANGE, YOU KNOW?


I DON'T KNOW HOW, OR WHERE OR WHY...ALL I KNOW IS THAT THEY *HAVE* TO CHANGE, SOMEHOW.


SEE YOU, PETE.
GOOD LUCK, CHARLIE.
I know what he meant. It's something you really have to experience in order to understand...that the worst thing in the world...


...is to be helpless... helpless...


...helpless...


IT WAS A GOOD SOLUTION, PETER. YOU COULD'VE GONE FOR HEAT TO DISSIPATE THE SKINSUIT, BUT IT WOULD'VE KILLED HIM. BY RAISING THE PRESSURE TO A CRITICAL POINT, THE VIBRANIUM COULD REVERT TO SOLID FORM AGAIN.
YEAH... WHATEVER...
TROUBLE IS, NOW HE'S TRAPPED IN THAT THING. THE DOCTORS SAY THEY CAN GET IN ENOUGH TO TAKE CARE OF HIS BODILY NEEDS, BUT STRIPPING IT OFF MAY BE IMPOSSIBLE. HE MIGHT BE LIKE THIS THE REST OF HIS LIFE.
DON'T BELIEVE IT, PETER. NOTHING'S IMPOSSIBLE. YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW THAT. TAKE COMFORT IN IT.
YEAH...I'M SURE I'LL GET A LOT OF COMFORT OUT OF THAT.
EXCUSE ME....
...ARE YOU MR. PETER PARKER?
YES, IS THERE A PROBLEM?
PHONE FOR YOU. IT'S YOUR WIFE.
MJ?
PETER, I... OH GOD...I'M OVER AT AUNT MAY'S HOUSE AND--
WHAT? WHAT IS IT? ARE YOU OKAY? IS MAY--
SHE...SHE'S ALL RIGHT, BUT WHEN CHARLIE BURNED DOWN THE APARTMENT, I THOUGHT WE COULD COME HERE, TO HER PLACE FOR A WHILE, AND--
AND WHAT? WHAT HAPPENED?

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